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ABSTRACT

These two volumes contain writings designed for the new reader who is in prison. Written by both inmates and external volunteers, the material in these volumes includes poems, stories, and short essays that deal with subjects of interest to prison inmates. To help the new reader, easier-to-read pieces are presented first. Titles in volume I are as follows: "Free"; "Nights"; "I've Got a Goal"; "Help"; "Someday"; When I Was a Kid..."; "A Sucker's Dream"; "My Family Doctor"; "A Thought from a Prisoner"; "A Better Way"; "Relieving My Tension"; "Restless"; "This Is My Story"; "Lisa's Story"; "Child Abuse"; "Wishes"; "The Story of Michael Scott"; "Over My Shoulder"; "My Student Is Good--and Bad"; "Stormwatch"; "Gary Allen Goes to Graterford"; "Going to the School"; "Life Inside"; and "Little Larry's Plan". Titles in volume II include the following: "A Day Begins for Andre"; "Confessions of a Broken Man"; "Unspoken"; "Old Head"; "Residents, Inmates, and Convicts"; "My Tutors"; "My Daddy's Job"; "Twice the Benefits"; "Being Daddy"; "Basketball--Why I Enjoy Coaching"; "Breaking the Ice"; "Surprise"; "Today Is Line Day"; "#115 Cell: An Oasis"; "New Urban Warrior"; "The Lifer"; "Anger"; "Fat Mouthing"; and "Prison is a Place." (YLB)

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INSIDE OUT

Writings from the Prison Literacy Project

Volume I-II

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INSIDE OUT

Writings
from the
Prison Literacy
Project

Volume I

DEDICATION

To all those from the inside now on the outside;

To all those on the outside who go inside

C 1991 by Prison Literacy Project, 4101 Kelly Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19129

INTRODUCTION

The Prison Literacy Project (PLP) is proud to present two volumes of writings designed for the new reader who is in prison. Written by both inmates and external volunteers, the material in this volume includes poems, stories, and short essays that deal with subjects of interest to prison residents. To help the new reader, easier-to-read pieces are presented first.

The Prison Literacy Project, founded in 1984, currently works with prison residents at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford in Pennsylvania. The purpose of the all-volunteer project is to have prison residents learn to read or significantly raise their reading level through an ongoing literacy tutoring program. All project participants will experience community partnership and empowerment through their personal interactions. Since the project began, more than 200 learners have been tutored and 125 tutors have been trained.

What makes the PLP, or any other successful project, work is not its structure but the guiding principles behind the structure. The PLP discovered that development of a successful community project involves having a vision of what is possible in the world. The PLP's vision is that individuals inside and outside prisons are members of one and the same community.

One special feature of the PLP is co-management with Graterford residents. In every management area, there are both internal and external managers. The managers meet monthly inside Graterford to discuss such areas of concern as communications, finance, integrity and well-being, tutor administration, and enrollment. This co-management is definitely a factor in the PLP's success. This spirit of cooperation and partnership has lead to the publication of a Prison Literacy Project Handbook, almost 20 issues of a newsletter, and an award-winning video documentary about the project.

Both volumes of Inside Out represent the combined efforts of all the students, tutors, managers, and friends of the PLP and all of them deserve to be acknowledged. Several individuals, however, merit special recognition. They include Prudence Greco-Morgan and John Griffin for their editorship, Julie Bussiere for reviewing the submissions, Sally Burke and Dick Behr for proofing, Eileen Schaller, Kennerd Short and Rona Fisher for artwork, Herman Volz for the cover design, and Havertown Printing for production.

It is the hope of the PLP that these readings will inspire beginning readers to continue on the path of literacy and perhaps begin to write stories of their own. The PLP would like to publish additional volumes of Inside Out and welcomes suggestions and submissions for future editions. Contact the PLP at 4101 Kelly Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19129 or call (215) 248-3494.

Joan H. Behr
Communications Manager
Fall 1991

"FREE"

You can imprison my body, but not my mind,
for it can travel through time.

My mind is free to go where it pleases,
to Paris, Japan, and down to Mexico.

My mind gives pleasure that is sometimes a tease,
I will refuse to wake up, refuse to let go.

With my mind, I will travel and have a good time,
for you can lock up my body, but never my mind.

"NIGHTS"

There is no greater joy,
than seeing the stars at night.

They put my mind at ease,
it is such a peaceful sight.

Stars twinkle on and off.
They are so far away.

I cannot wait for tonight to come,
because I have three new wishes to say.

- Robert Brown, Jr.

"I'VE GOT A GOAL"

I am a black man with a goal to meet before my time.
I dream of the time when I can stand before you and say
"I can read!"

It has been a long time
but now it's time to stand up
and try to do my best.

I am not going to be afraid anymore.
It is a dream deeply rooted in my mind.

I am a black man that can't read, but...
I have a goal to meet before my time.

- Gervin Deaton

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"HELP"

First they showed us letters, mixed up, not words.
They said this is what someone who could not read saw
when they looked at words.

I wanted to help.

They said Graterford was a maximum security prison. They said prisoners who were in there had committed serious crimes.
We would be working with these people -- face to face.

I wanted to help.

The hallway was long and crowded, filled with men who were in there... for who knows what. They were all around us.
Calling to us. It was overwhelming but...

I wanted to help.

I've worked with two men so far. One became a better reader and was able to leave the program.
The second has moved from reading at level 1 to level 3.
It is good to know that.

I am helping.

- Ellen B.

"SOMEDAY"

Someday I'm going to find the time
to do the things I have in mind.

I'll visit friends some old and new;
I'll read a book or even a poem or two.

Someday I'll be able to take a long walk
and sit a spell with my friends and talk.

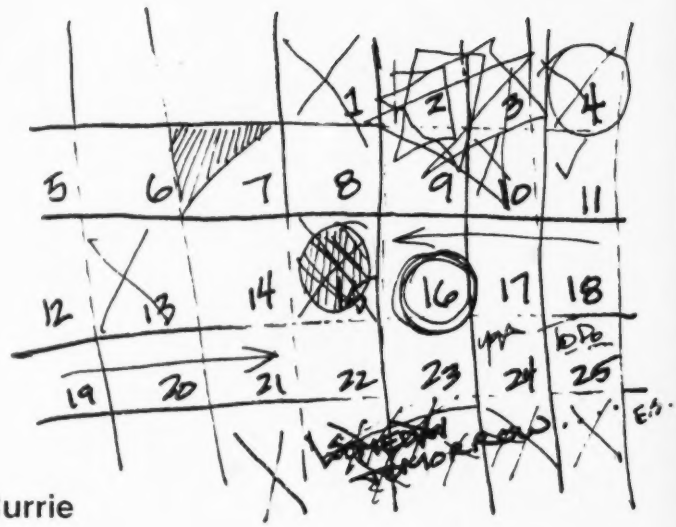
I'll smell a rose; I'll pet a cat,
and even watch the kids play baseball.

I'll gaze into a pond so deep
and climb a hill that's not too steep.

I'll picnic in the grassy green
and just sit there quite serene.

I'll do all these things; I really will...
not today...

but someday I will be free.



- Preston L. Currie

"WHEN I WAS A KID ..."

When I was a kid it was hard for me
because I did not know how to read or write.
And there were a lot of gang wars in the school.

One day a friend of mine got killed.
And I was with him the day he got killed.
So I have not gone back to school because of what
happened to my friend.

And with my brothers it was too hard for me
because when they were in school they did not help me
with my home work.
And I did not know what to do.

By the time I was 21 years old, I was back in school,
and it happened to me that I almost got killed,
But I got away from them.
Then I had stopped going to school.

Now that I have a chance to do it again
I am going to try my best in school,
with my tutor's help.

And I thank my tutor for being by my side
because "a mind is a terrible thing to waste"
and with her help I think I can do better.

- Roberto Santiago

"A SUCKER'S DREAM"

When I get out, I will be on top of the world.
I will have nice clothes, a fine car,
and be around lots of pretty women.

When I get out, I will go to all the fun places.
I will go to basketball games, to wild parties,
and maybe even to the Superbowl.

When I get out, I will be able to do anything I want to.
Nobody can tell me where to go, when to go to bed, or when to wake up.
Nobody will be looking over my shoulder to see what I'm up to.

This place is getting on my nerves.
I don't feel like going to work everyday.
And my buddies keep trying to get me to go to school
and stuff like that.

I don't have time for that. I have to get on the phone to get
somebody to send me some cash.
I need stuff from the store.
I need some socks and underwear also.

Yes, when I get out things will be a whole lot different.
Before when I was out there, I had it all.
Well, I would have had it all if things had gone as I planned.
But I got busted just when I was getting close to the big money.
I would have been on my way to the top.

This time will be different. I know it.

- Steven (Farid) Blackburn

"MY FAMILY DOCTOR"

I had to go to the doctor's office with my Mom one day. I thought she was sick. Then I found out the doctor wanted to see me. He told me that he was going to give me a needle and that it wouldn't hurt. He put the needle in my arm, and when I woke up it didn't hurt.

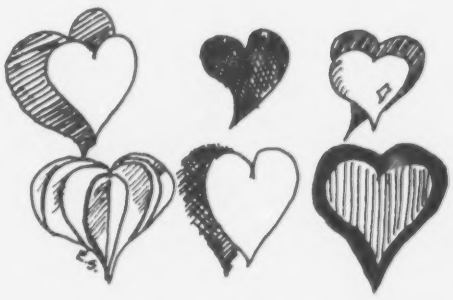
My Mom said that I fell out, but it was my nap time so I took it. The doctor said he wanted to take my temperature. I thought, "Okay, that couldn't hurt." But he went to the wrong end.

My Mom says he's our family doctor. I feel he is my closest friend. After our visit the doctor gave me a taffy. My Mom said that if I'm bad she will take me back to the doctor. I'm doing better in school, and my Mom says I'm a big help around the house.

I won't see that doctor anymore!

- Lamont Henderson

"A THOUGHT FROM A PRISONER"



It seems that certain folks we meet
are thought of for a while,

And others are remembered,
for a special deed or smile.

But those who stay within our hearts
are very, very few.

And that is just the kind of friend
who I have found in you.

- Herbert Saxton

"A BETTER WAY"

Please don't shoot me, I have no money.
I am looking for a job to feed my family.
Let's talk for awhile and straighten out this mess
of you going to jail and leaving my family fatherless.

If I had a dollar, I would gladly give it, I would.
I would help you out, really, if I could.
I am desperate like you and it is a job that I need.
Won't you please listen to me plead?

The good deed that you do will surely please.
The gun in your hand is so deadly a tease.
Let's look for work together, yes, me and you.
Till our ears hear the words,
"Men, report to work by two."

- Robert Brown, Jr.

"RELIEVING MY TENSION"

My day begins at 6:30 in the morning, when most inmates go to chow. I like to start the day off with breakfast when I plan on lifting weights. You see in order to have the energy to lift the weight, you must supply your body with the needed food. It's always best to eat hours before you lift.

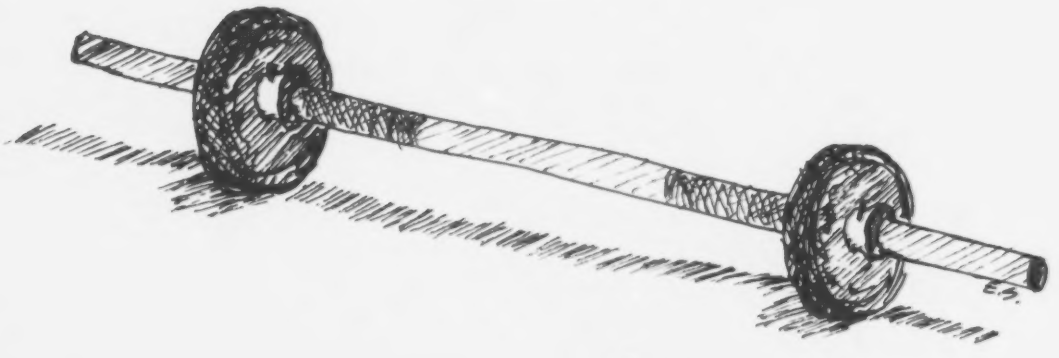
Time to go to work, now talk about tension. I work in the law library where things can get pretty steamed up. All morning long, you have people coming in looking for the ultimate answer that will get them out by the next day. Wrong!

It takes time when you are working on your case. So by the time you explain all this to 20 different people, your patience is running thin and it's time to hit the weight pile.

I like to work out in the yard where there is plenty of fresh air and sunshine (which, by the way, gives you vitamin D). Today is Monday which means I will be doing bench work. I like to start light and work my way up to the maximum weight I can handle. After that, which is about ten sets of chest presses, I like to do four sets of pullovers and finish off with three sets of flys.

Well, there you have it; another day gone with my tension lowered. The next day, I start over with different exercises, that is if I'm up to it.

- Tom Kirkner



"RESTLESS"

Willie was trying to get to sleep. He kept tossing and turning. First he tried to lay on his left side, then on his right side. Nothing seemed to work.

Every night for the last week he kept having a bad dream. Now, he was afraid to go to sleep. In his dream, Willie was married and had a son. He would dream his son wanted him to read him a bedtime story.

Willie could not do it. Willie could not read. In the dream his son would cry and cry until he fell asleep. Willie felt so ashamed because he couldn't read.

His wife felt badly because their son would cry himself to sleep each night. The dream would always end with Willie holding his son's book and crying.

Willie heard the alarm clock ring. He got up and looked in the mirror. He looked tired without sleep. He went to the telephone and called his girlfriend.

When she answered the telephone, he told her that he would like her to help him get into a program that would teach him to read.

He told her about his dreams and she told him that she would help him. She told Willie how proud she was of him and that she loved him more than before.

That night when Willie went to bed, he fell asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

He slept like a baby.

- John Griffin

"THIS IS MY STORY"

When I first came to jail, I couldn't read or write. When I met Tip, he started to help me learn to read and write. Also, Tip taught me to do addition. Then I started going to Night School two nights a week.

Next, I met Julie McKee. She is my outside tutor. She also teaches me how to read and write.

Over the past couple of months, I have been working hard so I can better myself and also to get a better job when I go home.

I will continue to study hard. I'm proud of myself and what I have accomplished. I'm grateful to both of them for working with me.

Tip and Julie make me work very hard. I thank them both for all that they have taught me.

I thank the Lord for all He has given me, giving Him my praise in return.

- James McFadden

"LISA'S STORY"

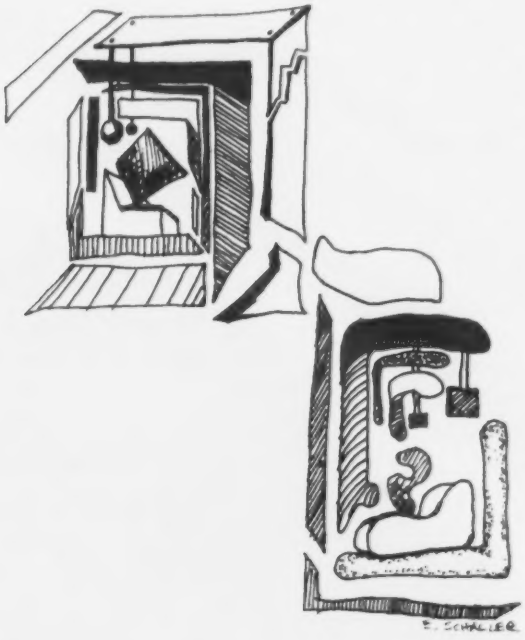
I was not sure what to expect the first time I went to Graterford to tutor. I had never been in a prison before, let alone actually talk to a prisoner.

I was more afraid of saying the wrong thing than being safe. Along with feeling anxious about being in a prison for the first time, I was terrified about teaching my student to read. I was not sure how to go about it.

After I met my student, I was a little more comfortable. I was excited to start forming our friendship.

I was still a little nervous, but I was sure that everything would work out.

- **Lisa G.**



"CHILD ABUSE"

Mother beat me, father did too.
I'm crying while I'm saying this poem to you.

Last night they fed me no dinner.
Every day I get thinner and thinner.

My back hurts in the center.
To hell is where I hope they soon enter.

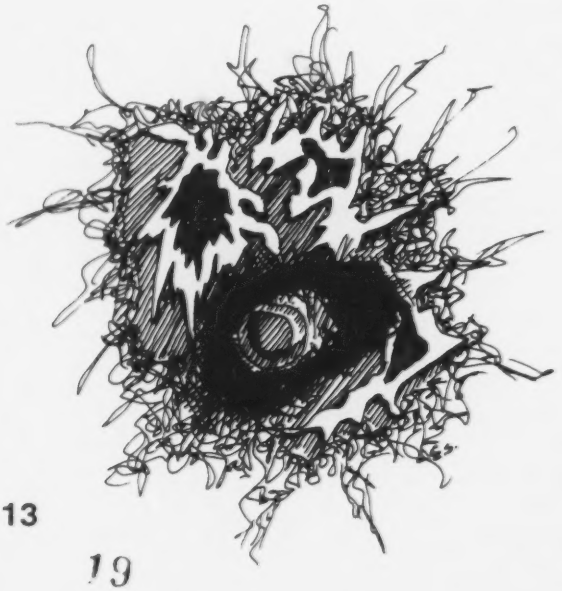
They get mad because people don't lend them money to live.
They take it out on me like I got some money to give.

They're addicted to the pipe.
I got beaten with an extension cord last night.

Help me before my mother and father have another crave,
or I will be in my grave.

One of my nerves is already loose.
I'm another victim of child abuse.

- Kshari Dublin (age 14)



"WISHES"

Did you ever hear that old saying, "Be careful what you wish for because you just might get your wish?"

When I was about five, my father spanked me for misbehaving.
I did something stupid like not eating my peas at dinner.
I wished he would just go away.

On my 14th birthday my Dad chaperoned my first high school dance.
That was the most important dance of my life.
He watched me the whole time.
I wished he would just go away.

One day I was punished for breaking curfew with my new boyfriend.
I wished, especially that night, he would just go away.
One day my Dad came home from the office and announced to us he had cancer. He died June 20, 1988.

I only have one piece of advice for anyone
who reads this story:
"Be careful what you wish for!"

- Diane Huff

"THE STORY OF MICHAEL SCOTT"

Growing up as a child, I never thought that I would be in jail. But one day in September 1987, while on my way to practice with the Eagles, the police arrested me.

They sent me to Bucks County Prison. After going to court, the judge sent me to Graterford.

When I first got there, all I could see was the 40-foot high prison wall. I was very scared. I was all alone with no one to trust until I joined the Jewish congregation.

Yes, I am a Black Jew. The people in the synagogue really helped me.

Then I decided to help myself. I joined the "Prison Literacy Project" because I was tired of hiding my reading problem. The president of the congregation introduced me to one of the volunteers of the PLP. Her name is Ellen.

We became good friends, and she really helped me with my reading problem. When I first met her, my reading skill was a level 1 and thanks to her I am up to a level 3.

Many thanks to Ellen and other PLP volunteers who have helped me and other inmates here at Graterford Prison. Without the volunteers, many people here would not have the opportunity to help themselves.

- Michael Scott

"OVER MY SHOULDER"

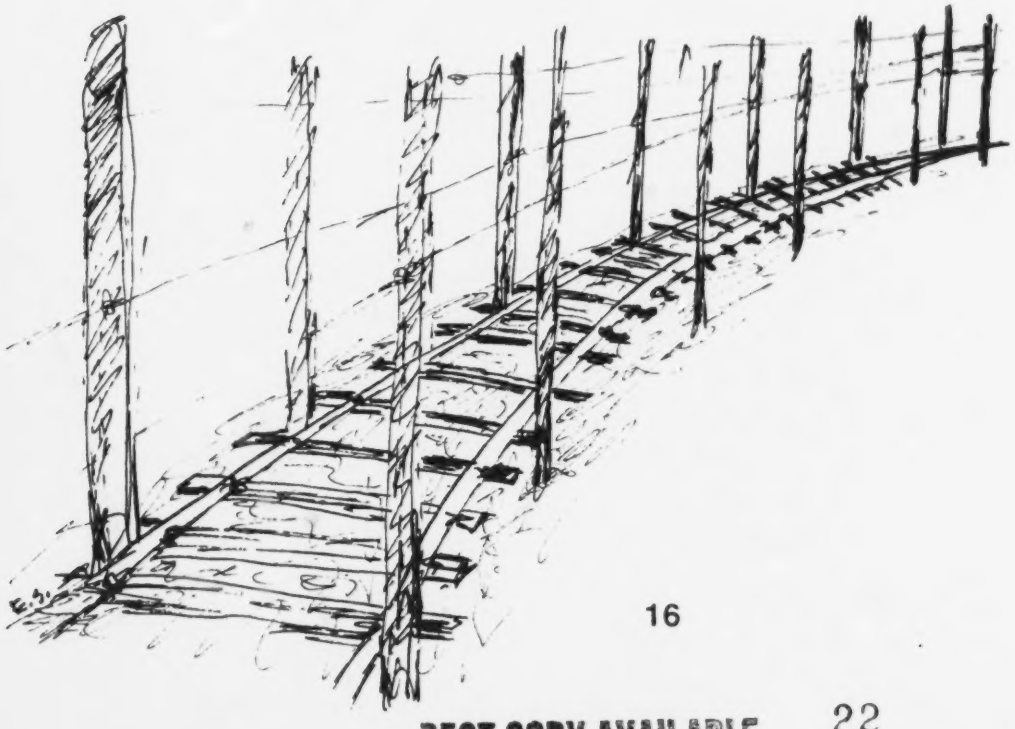
Here I am in St. Clair Park, looking over the hill at the train tracks.
I'll think I'll go to town today.
It's 10:30. In a few minutes, I'll see the smoke.

If I start out for the bridge now, by the time it gets to the bend,
I'll be able to catch it.
Let's see, I've got $5 and a quarter for a phone call.

It's almost here. I'll start running now.
That way my timing will be right for the jump.
I can hear my heart beating in time to the rhythm of the train.

It's here... passing me... 1, 2, 3 the box cars go by.
The next car is mine. There's the ladder. I have it now.
Three quick steps, and a jump... I'm on... I'm gone.

- Michael Steward



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"MY STUDENT IS GOOD --- AND BAD"

My student studies hard. He does his homework. He reads and reads and reads.

My student is good.

My student has reading tapes he can listen to in his cell. By doing this, he got better and better.

My student is good.

The guard found the tapes and said, "You cannot have tapes in your cell!" The guard found other things, too, "You cannot make wine in your cell!"

My student is bad.

My student got 45 days in lock-up. Then it turned to 60 days, then 90 days. I get sad ! I get very sad ! I will beat him when he gets out!

My student is bad.

I write to him every day. He reads the letters. He writes, too. He gets a lot of letters. He reads and reads and reads.

My student is good.

At last, my student got out of the "hole." We study together again. He studies very hard. He does his homework. He reads and reads and reads.

My student is good.

- Ann Kellogg

"S T O R M W A T C H"

Storm's up on the horizon
ain't no wind a blowing
ain't no rain fell yet.

But there's a storm up on the horizon
gonna have to get brother to tighten the door.

Wind gotta way of pushing through,
creeps through cracks and all,
suppose I could do it.

Roof needs mending too.
Rain can sure do a misery to a floor,
seems to make it sag.
Even when it dries it don't look right
water logged and all,
suppose I could do it myself.

Sky's getting grey
and a breeze is building up,
leaves on that tree just a shaking.

Yep, storm's up on the horizon,
looks like it might be pretty bad.
Sure glad I looked up,
Got some time to prepare.
Better go tell brother about the door
and the roof....

- John Griffin

"GARY ALLEN GOES TO GRATERFORD"

Gary Allen needed money. Gary had problems and needed money to buy a car. Gary did not make enough money from his job to buy a car. After Gary paid for food, rent, and clothing--he was broke!

Gary had a gun from his days as a soldier in Viet Nam. Gary was mad at the world for his problem. Gary never believed that Gary could be the cause of the problem. One day after work Gary decided to go for a walk along Main Street. Gary took his gun from his Viet Nam days with him.

To this day, Gary can't explain why he took the gun.
Gary also cannot explain why he needed a car so bad that he could not save his money and buy it.
Gary pulled a .38 caliber from his coat pocket,
pointed it at the sales clerk, then demanded, "Give me all the money."

Gary had robbed a convenience store of $600 in cash. Gary cannot explain why he robbed the convenience store. Gary Allen was arrested for robbery.
James Johnson, Esq., was appointed to be Gary's lawyer.
Gary's lawyer told him it would be wise to take a plea bargain for a 5 to 10.
Gary said, "No deal."

Gary had a jury trial before Judge Smith and a jury of six women and six men. All 12 jurors agreed that Gary was guilty.
Judge Smith sentenced Gary to 10 to 20 at Graterford.
Gary knows now that "fast money can get you 'big time' at Graterford."
Gary cannot explain a lot of things, but he has a lot of time to figure it all out.

Gary Allen goes to Graterford today.

- Ezra (Jabbar) Bozeman

"GOING TO THE SCHOOL"

First I sign in at the front gate. Then the guard stamps my hand and ties a white plastic band around my wrist.

After I get my picture ID badge, I walk through a metal detector, hoping I won't set it off.

Now I wait with my Prison Literacy Project friends for an escort and once he comes, we begin the journey to the prison school.

It seems such a long walk from the front gate down to the school and it is a long walk -- from the outside world to the world of the prison school.

My voice echoes off the concrete walls and my eyes bounce off the faces of the men in the hall.

Should I look straight ahead? Should I look to the left out the windows toward the yard? Should I look right, through the windows of the factory or the auditorium?
Do I chat with the guard who is our escort?
Do I smile at the inmates who hang out in the hall?

By the time these thoughts have gone through my mind,
I'm at the last gate and into the school.
I'm glad to reach the familiar tables and chairs of the library,
at last away from the uneasiness of being in the hall.

- Joan Behr

"LIFE INSIDE"

This is my story of doing life inside Graterford.
I am a lifer who wants his freedom.

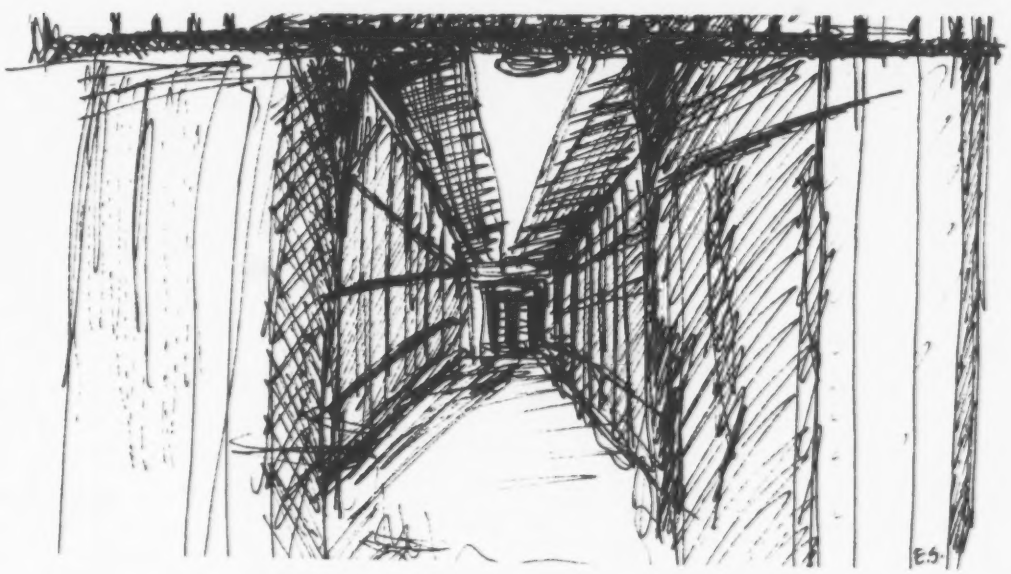
Freedom is what I dream about sometimes.
And when I am not dreaming of freedom,
I am sitting in my cell trying not to lose my mind.

Sometimes you can't sleep because of crying,
and when you do sleep you dream of freedom.

You dream of being with your family.
You try not to lose your mind,
but you don't know what to do.

So you cry, you dream, you want to be free
day in and night out,
all the time.

- Gervin Deaton



"LITTLE LARRY'S PLAN"

Little Larry had a plan.
He spoke to his brother Jake about it.
His plan was to make a lot of money.
Jake asked Larry if he had a plan that would aid him in making money.

Larry said that he didn't, but that he was sure that he could come up with a plan. Jake told his brother that he should take his time and think this out.
Jake also told Larry that he should speak with their Uncle, Big Larry.

The next day Little Larry was on his way to Big Larry's house. On the way to Big Larry's house, Larry met his friend Slime. He told Slime about his plan. Slime told Larry that he knew how they could make a lot of money.
He said that all we had to do is to find a hustle.

"What kind of hustle?" asked Larry.
"Well, we could pick up the slips for the local number writers," Slime said. "They would pay us a lot of money."
So, Larry and Slime started working for the number writers.

The number writers started to cheat them out of their money. When people hit the number and they did not get paid, they became angry and went looking for Slime and Little Larry. Little Larry was sure this was not the way he wanted to make a lot of money.

Once again, Little Larry started out to see Uncle Big Larry. On the way to Big Larry's house, Little Larry met another friend. His name was Sleazy.

After Little Larry told Sleazy about his plan to make a lot of money and what happened with the numbers running plan, Sleazy told Larry he knew a better way to make money.

Sleazy said they could break into people's houses during the day while everyone was at work. They could sell the stuff that they stole and make a lot of money.

Little Larry and Sleazy met the next morning and began to look for a house to break into. Once they found one, they broke in and found this great big dog waiting for them. The dog chased them and bit Little Larry on his behind. Little Larry ran all the way to his uncle's house.

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Huffing and puffing, Little Larry told his uncle, Big Larry, about everything that had happened. Big Larry told his nephew that his plans did not work because they were wrong!

"First of all," Big Larry said, "You have to have a workable plan, a plan that is realistic. You must know how much money you want to make and how much time you need to make this money."

Big Larry added, "You also must have a plan of making money honestly and not include people with bad ideas. If you don't know where you are going or how you are going to get there, you are only going to find yourself in the same place you were in before, or worse off than you were before."

Little Larry left Big Larry's house and walked to the drug store. There he brought a newspaper with the 35 cents his uncle lent him. On the way home, he started to read the Want Ad section. He decided he would get a job and earn money and then he would save most of what he earned until he had a lot of money.

Little Larry learned that he could get a lot of money and that if he worked for it honestly and saved something everytime he got his pay-check, after a while, he would have a lot of money.

- John Griffin

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Prison Literacy
Project

Volume II

32

DEDICATION

To all those from the inside now on the outside;

To all those on the outside who go inside

C 1991 by Prison Literacy Project, 4101 Kelly Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19129

INTRODUCTION

The Prison Literacy Project (PLP) is proud to present two volumes of writings designed for the new reader who is in prison. Written by both inmates and external volunteers, the material in this volume includes poems, stories, and short essays that deal with subjects of interest to prison residents. To help the new reader, easier-to-read pieces are presented first.

The Prison Literacy Project, founded in 1984, currently works with prison residents at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford in Pennsylvania. The purpose of the all-volunteer project is to have prison residents learn to read or significantly raise their reading level through an ongoing literacy tutoring program. All project participants will experience community partnership and empowerment through their personal interactions. Since the project began, more than 200 learners have been tutored and 125 tutors have been trained.

What makes the PLP, or any other successful project, work is not its structure but the guiding principles behind the structure. The PLP discovered that development of a successful community project involves having a vision of what is possible in the world. The PLP's vision is that individuals inside and outside prisons are members of one and the same community.

One special feature of the PLP is co-management with Graterford residents. In every management area, there are both internal and external managers. The managers meet monthly inside Graterford to discuss such areas of concern as communications, finance, integrity and well-being, tutor administration, and enrollment. This co-management is definitely a factor in the PLP's success. This spirit of cooperation and partnership has lead to the publication of a Prison Literacy Project Handbook, almost 20 issues of a newsletter, and an award-winning video documentary about the project.

Both volumes of Inside Out represent the combined efforts of all the students, tutors, managers, and friends of the PLP and all of them deserve to be acknowledged. Several individuals, however, merit special recognition. They include Prudence Greco-Morgan and John Griffin for their editorship, Julie Bussiere for reviewing the submissions, Sally Burke and Dick Behr for proofing, Eileen Schaller, Kennerd Short and Rona Fisher for artwork, Herman Volz for the cover design, and Havertown Printing for production.

It is the hope of the PLP that these readings will inspire beginning readers to continue on the path of literacy and perhaps begin to write stories of their own. The PLP would like to publish additional volumes of Inside Out and welcomes suggestions and submissions for future editions. Contact the PLP at 4101 Kelly Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19129 or call (215) 248-3494.

Joan H. Behr
Communications Manager
Fall 1991

"A DAY BEGINS FOR ANDRE"

At about five o'clock in the morning, the guard comes to unlock the bottom lock on the door to my cell. The lock is very loud and sometimes wakes me up, but I usually go back to sleep.

This morning I woke up and jumped off my bed. The first thing I did was to thank the Lord for giving me another day giving Him praise. I walked to the sink, washed my face, brushed my teeth, and put on my clothes.

Six or six-thirty, the guard throws a switch to unlock the top lock on my cell. Then I am able to open the door and begin to walk down to the end of the block to the chow hall to eat breakfast.

As I walk, I see a lot of unpleasant faces. When I arrive at the door, a guard is usually standing there and tells people to take their hats off.

I go to the end of the line. People sometimes jump in front of other people, and it sometimes starts a fight. Sometimes they use a metal tray to fight each other, and the guards do not break the fight up unless there are many guards present.

As the line inches forward toward the serving counter, I pick a tray out of a stack. The menu varies from day to day. There always is oatmeal, but I hate it. They sometimes serve cakes, and I take one when they have them. Sometimes the person serving the food has a very bad attitude when doing his job. If eggs are available, I take some and get some milk.

I take my tray to a table and I begin to eat. I try to sit with a friend. When I'm finished I walk around the tables to get to the garbage can, then I empty the tray.

So starts another day at Graterford.

- Andre Thomas

"CONFESSIONS OF A BROKEN MAN"

I'm just asking you to listen, not to understand, these
confessions of a broken man.
I don't know where my story starts, or I'd go back then.
All I know is that it's a sad sad tale, and so it has to end.
I know I drank too much, though I didn't there at first.
Oh, I'd have a beer or two, and it just seemed to go from bad to worse.
Then one day, I noticed that my money was going out faster than
it was coming in. And I got scared.
And I started gambling.
And I'm just the kind who never seems to win.

I had a woman, guess every man does.
And every man thinks his is the best....mine was.
Stuck by me through thick and thin,
'til it just got too thin, I guess.
She walked in one day, said she had to leave me.
I could have sworn I saw a big tear in her eye.
I heard the other day that she got married again.
I hope he treats her better than I.

Well, if you're getting the idea that I'm some kind of a bum,
you're catching on pretty fast.
And if you're wondering if I'm a wino, these are all my
fingerprints on this glass. I've been sitting here in this bar
since it opened up this morning, and it's almost time to close.

I guess it's about time to find me a gutter
and tuck myself in for the night.
Where does a man go when he's already at the bottom?
There are not many choices; he either picks himself up or lays
back down to rot. No life starts out to be like mine.
Pain is never planned. And yet, here I sit sharing
these confessions of a broken man.

I'm just asking you to listen, not to understand,
these confessions of a broken man.

- Anonymous

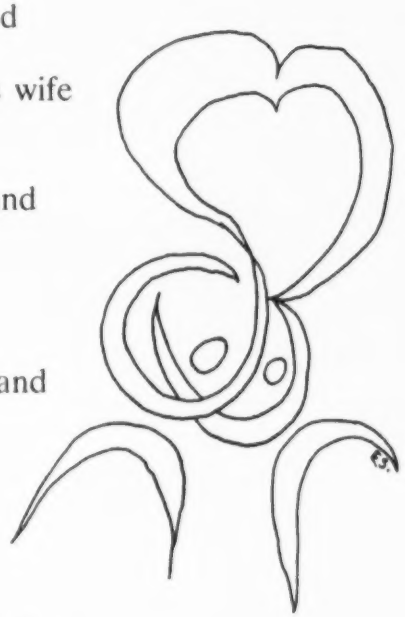
"UNSPOKEN"

When he left for work early that morning,
he and his wife had had a fight and were mad.
She had stood in the doorway to watch him go.
She looked so sad.

As he drove to work, his anger subsided and
guilt and remorse set in.
He promised God he would never leave his wife
like that again.

For many years she had stood by his side and
lifted him up from his lows.
They shared love and secrets that
no one else knows.

When he returned home, softly she spoke, and
he said, "I know."
Together they understood that
they would always be one,
for in their hearts it is written so.



- Robert Brown, Jr.

"OLD HEAD"

I have been playing basketball now for over 30 years. I have played in Graterford Prison for 16 of those 30 years, and now that I have gotten a little older, some of the younger guys are starting to call me "Old Head."

One day about three weeks ago, I was playing basketball with some guys about 23 to 25 years of age. We played three full court games,
and during the final game I was pretty tired. They would run up and down the court so much that I couldn't keep up.

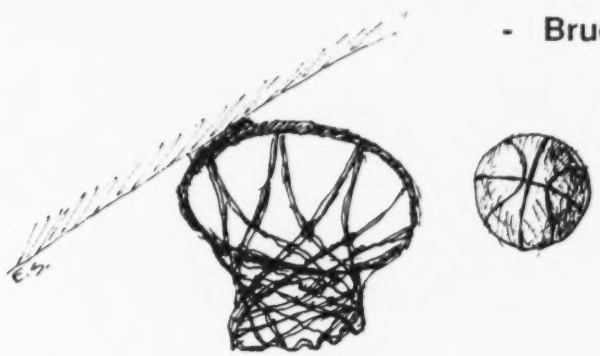
So on one play down the court, I felt I could not make it, and one of the guys started saying, "Come on, Old Head." Well, I just bent over and said, "I'll be here when you come back!"

Everyone on the court started laughing so hard that we had to stop playing the game.

Whenever they see me now, they always ask how Old Head is
doing, and we have a good laugh and go our separate ways.
Old Head is now 40 years old,
and my basketball days are just about over now.

So if you see Old Head playing basketball, have a good laugh,
tell the younger players to slow down a little
and to let Old Head catch up.

- Bruce Norris



"RESIDENTS, INMATES, AND CONVICTS"

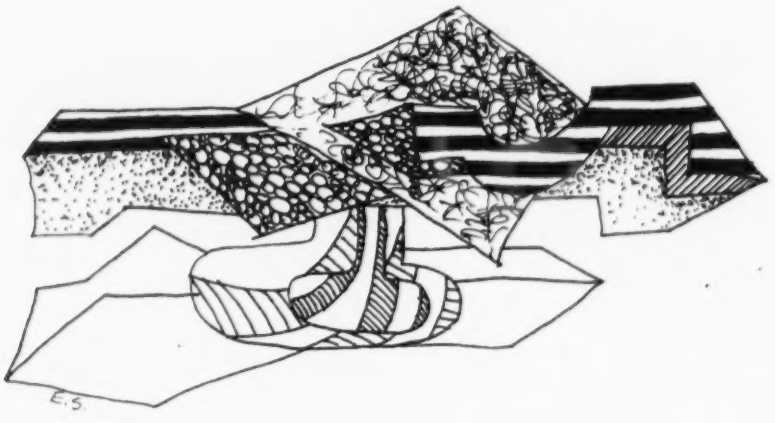
There are three different categories of prisoners in jail.
The first is the resident. He is the last to come to jail.
He is young, new, and he is the one who keeps confusion
in the jail. He is lazy and confused.

An inmate is one who runs around the jail playing, laughing, and joking with the guards. He is the one whose cell rarely
gets locked and who gets all the special little favors.
He is also the one who furnishes the guards with all the
information they need to come down on other prisoners.

A convict is a person who knows and understands why he is here
and the main object of pursuit by all the friendly guards.
The convict does not ask for favors. The only time you
will see him talking to a guard is to ask a question
which is related to his job because he is here to do time
and not to associate with those who keep him confined.

Of the three types of prisoners, residents, inmates, or convicts,
guess who a guard respects most?

- A. Rahman



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"MY TUTORS"

My tutors have worked hard for me. I think it is tremendous that they are concerned about me and my well being. They have shown real dedication to what they feel in their hearts. I know that the only way to show my appreciation is to be a real hard worker.

My first tutor had me do all my homework without teaching first. Then she taught me those things I messed up. I found it difficult to learn this way, but it was fun. I think her technique of teaching was different.

My second tutor is straightforward. She teaches first then assigns the homework.

My third tutor used the same method and style, but he uses trick questions to throw me off. He makes me think why things are right or wrong.

I have been tutored about four months. I feel I have made tremendous progress. I feel that the experience has uplifted my education lOO%.

I truly feel that the Prison Literacy Project is a positive force for those who need beginning reading, writing, and spelling. I hope they can get more tutors and that the students can continue to learn in this program.

Thank you.

- Landis Murchinson

"MY DADDY'S JOB"

I'm gonna go see my Daddy on his job today. His job is so important that he has to stay at it all day and all night. His job is so important there are guards to watch everything and a big wall so nothin' gets lost.

I asked him what his job was, and he said, "Makin' a better person of myself." My Daddy said it's a hard job that takes a long time, but he's gonna do it just right. And I know he's doin' a good job cause every time Momma takes me to see him he looks better. He shows me how his muscles are gettin' bigger, and he showed me some papers with his name on them that looked like diploma awards. Daddy said he got them for goin' to school on his job and learnin' things like math and English.

He got some awards for liftin' some real heavy things, and he joined a baseball team that won almost all their games. The team got an award for bein' the champs. Daddy said that they didn't fight while they were playin' either. Daddy got another award for goin' to a class where he learned how to make decisions without gettin' mad so easy.

I like my Daddy more now 'cause when we go to see him he plays with me and we talk and he puts his big arms around me like he don't ever want to let me go. He does my Momma like that too - and she tells him to stop, but she don't mean it 'cause I see her eyes get real happy and soft. She smiles a lot now, and her and Daddy are always makin' little kisses at each other. They don't holler as much anymore.

My Daddy's doin' so good on his job that Momma said he'll be comin' home soon. And Daddy said makin' a better person of himself is a job he's gonna keep on doin' even after he gets home.

- David Williams

"TWICE THE BENEFITS"

"What? You tutor at Graterford. Well, isn't that interesting," the new neighbor remarked doubtfully.

"I'm well paid," I assured him.

"I thought you were a volunteer."

"I am," I said. "I do not get paid in money. I get paid in other ways."

Then I listed some of them.

--the pleasure of meeting interesting people and exchanging new ideas.

-- the satisfaction of seeing a student's eyes light up when he grasps a new concept, when he writes something he was having trouble with before, when he realizes mistakes can be helpful when you learn from them, when he reads something that gives <u>him</u> useful information.

-- the appreciation in knowing the student is glad I took the trouble to come (it is a 50-mile round trip; I know others go farther), and I am glad he is there and eager to go ahead.

-- the feeling of accomplishment when we work together and make progress.

The neighbor looked thoughtful, then smiled. "I guess money couldn't buy those benefits."

"You're right," I agreed.

- Doris Patterson

"BEING DADDY"

I was brought up when being a father, uncle, and big brother were the first heroic aspirations of a young boy. There is no greater thrill for me than to be placed in the role of big brother, uncle, or father.

Recently when I was working in the Family Resource Center (children's activity section of the Graterford Prison visiting room), a little young lady, three or four years old, came staggering up to our door with one of the large doll houses we give out. The doll house is awkward, and just as she reached the door, it appeared that she must have struck her leg because she burst into tears, raised her hands, and literally leaped into my arms.

Well, I was in "Daddy Heaven." "What is wrong with my itsey, bitsey baby?... did the bad old house hurt her leg?"

Then a shadow fell across the door of our play center. The child, who seem to have been watching the door anyway, tightened her arms around my neck and buried her head in my shoulder.

Now, I have been in prison for a few years, but I had absolutely no difficulty identifying the face and posture of an angry mother. Both the mother and I realized, at the same time, what was going on.

My little lady had instinctively or shyly sought the safety of a Daddy figure. The doll house did not hit her leg. She had been told to return her doll house as a punishment for fighting with her little brother over a toy.

Mom was trying hard not to smile at her daughter's antics. As I handed the child back to her mother, the mother whispered that her daughter could come back and get another toy in a little while.

This whole scene was refreshing, and the mother's and daughter's trust felt very good, indeed.

- Hakim Brown

"BASKETBALL - WHY I ENJOY COACHING"

Basketball is a thinking man's game. You can learn a lot of things about the sport by being a coach. You must have a great deal of discipline in order to just deal with a team of men, because if there's no discipline you will always be blown out; you'll lose the game.

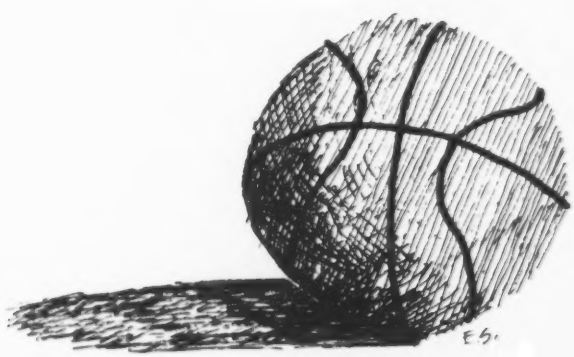
Another big part of basketball is being able to control your team, for example, to pick the starting five, make the best chemistry. If you do not have controls, your team will not succeed to the playoff or championship.

Basketball can help you to build up your patience. If you are not patient when the other team is ahead, you may lose your control. It also can help you with your dealing with people, because if you have the proper attitude it will help you succeed in any line of business.

One good thing about basketball is that the sport is a team activity. This means everybody will have to talk to one another when on the playing floor; one hand has to know what the other is doing, at all times, to eliminate the problems.

Another thing I find enjoyable is the fact that the coach makes the decisions at a second's notice. And last, but not least, I enjoy the competition.

- Keith Anderson



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"BREAKING THE ICE"

My back is to the wall. I have painted myself into a corner. Now I must look for the advantage that is to be found in each so-called disadvantage. I am beginning to see things in a different light.

I never desired to write anything such as a novel or short story while being incarcerated. I figured that the work might be tainted by anger, frustration, or hate. I thought prison just would not be a place for creativity.

Now, I don't have much choice. It has come down to either you begin to write now or time may write you off as an author. For inspiration, I can think of a few writers who wrote very well while imprisoned. There have been a few writers who gained financial success while behind bars, Carl Chessman, for example.

I am still against writing a story using prison as its setting. Imagine trying to capture the interest of three million readers using a prison as the story's setting. Who wants to visualize themselves as an inmate of a prison or as a prison guard? Who wants to read about prisons? It's depressing.

Yet after some reflection, writing about prison may deter a few readers from contemplating a life of crime or from pursuing a criminal objective. If you can prevent a few people from having to actually experience this prison life as an inmate, then one has gained a measure of success.

Maybe I can dress the prison story up a bit so that it won't be depressing. An example: A story about an inmate who has $4 million buried out in the free world in various milk cans. Can A is buried in New Jersey containing $1 million and Can B is buried in Texas. He has this young trustworthy wife who goes to his stash periodically to keep him financially supplied to fight his pending appeals. He has rugs on his cell floor; owns a TV, radio, video, and refrigerator; and enjoys conjugal visits with his wife on a weekly basis by paying the warden.

The imagination can remove anything depressing. Boy! This is going to be good.

- Stanley Pitcher

"SURPRISE"

It was pitch black, darker than he'd ever known it. He needed light, badly. Rummaging through his pockets, he hoped to find a match. Although he was a nonsmoker, he sometimes wound up with a book of matches after a party, the result of having lit the cigarette of some young lady, but he couldn't find one now. Dammit, not one match! He searched his pockets frantically, over and over again approaching panic. "Gotta get myself together," he thought, "Gotta think. What am I gonna do???"

He stood there with his hands in his pockets twiddling his fingers. He thought he felt something in the corner of his pocket. His heart leaped. Gently but firmly, he pulled the pocket inside out, using both hands to hold the object and finally disengaging it. It felt like... it was. He had a rumpled paper match.

Before his exhilaration could reach its peak, it dissipated. "I don't have a striker," he cried. His mind raced for a solution, while he babbled on and on. "Ain't this a bitch, a match with no striker? What good is... hey wait a minute." It dawned on him that in his recollection there was something about matches. Yes, that's it, the sulphur, something about the sulphur. Then, he had it!

Long ago, while still in high school, there was a chemistry class. The instructor was always conducting experiments. On this particular day, the teacher was explaining that there was sulphur in a match and sulphur in glass, that you could ignite a paper match by dragging it along glass. "Damn, I hope I've got this right," he whispered. He knew there was the chance he'd missed some vital aspect of the lesson. During the demonstration that long ago day, his attention had been riveted on the physical composition of a young lady in the class and not really on the chemical composition of a match, but he had to try.

He felt around the enclosure for a window, already knowing there was none. As he moved forward, an object caught him smartly on the shin. "Damn," he yelped and reached down to massage his pained leg. Touching and examining the obstruction in his way, he discovered to his joy that it was a table with a glass top.

He wasn't really convinced about this scientific assertion at all. It seemed to run contrary to logic. After all, didn't rough surfaces strike matches? Well, he didn't have a choice. He carefully felt about to determine the size of the table top. It was sizeable... about three feet across. He couldn't recall anything about what condition the glass should be in, but it seemed to make sense to clean it. The only available cloth was his undershirt, so he took it off making sure all the time that he maintained a firm grip on the match. He set about the task of cleaning the heavily soiled glass. Again he started his musing. "I've got to spit on this and get a nice clean top. And now for the moment of truth."

He put the match to the glass and stroked. Nothing. "Damn! It must still be a little wet." He began to rub and polish, stood back to wait a few seconds and then positioned his match and stroked the glass. Again, nothing! His match was coming apart. He knew his next chance would be his last. He turned the match over to the fresh side, layed it at the widest part of the table, pressed his forefinger firmly on the head... then dragged it quickly across the width of the table top.

It sizzled, fizzled, and CAME TO LIFE. In the darkened room, the match had the effect of a high intensity lamp. His eyes were on fire.

"Daddy, Daddy. Wake up," his young son cried from behind the beam of the flashlight.

"What kind of dream was that," he shouted as his son lowered the flashlight and wondered if his Daddy had lost his mind.

- Walt Sanders

"TODAY IS LINE DAY"

Everyday is Line Day, but Tuesday begins with the "Telephone Line." It is 6:30 a.m. when the whistle blows, and I want to sleep just one-half hour longer. But I must get up to sign up for the telephone. There is a line at the top of the stairs. First, one guy jumps the line, then two guys, then three guys jump into the line. That is when I start yelling to the guard, but only one guy moves to the back of the line where he belongs.

The "Sick Call" Line is much simpler. You just sign your name to the bottom of the list on the desk. The trouble begins when they call "sick call" for your block (when the doctor is ready) and you have to stand in line in the hallway until your number is called to see the doctor.

After the Phone Line and the Sick Call Line comes the good old Chow Line. Four sections were let out for the Phone Line and two for the Chow Line. All 300 or more men meet at the dining room door. Again, those who cannot wait, creep along the side until it is safe to slip into line.

When the line for chow is half as long, then the loud speaker blares out that there are two more lines you must go to this morning. The "Medication Line" and the "Sheet, Pillowcase and Towel Lines" are now forming at the front of the block.

The front of the block is one quarter of a mile away. If you miss handing in your linen, then you must sleep on dirty sheets for a week, and if you miss your medication, you have to follow the pill cart to the next block and wait until the end of that line because you missed it on your own block.

Now, all of this must be done in time for the "Work Line" at 7:30 a.m., where everyone stands until his work detail is called. If you are not out with the Work Line then you get docked one half-hour.

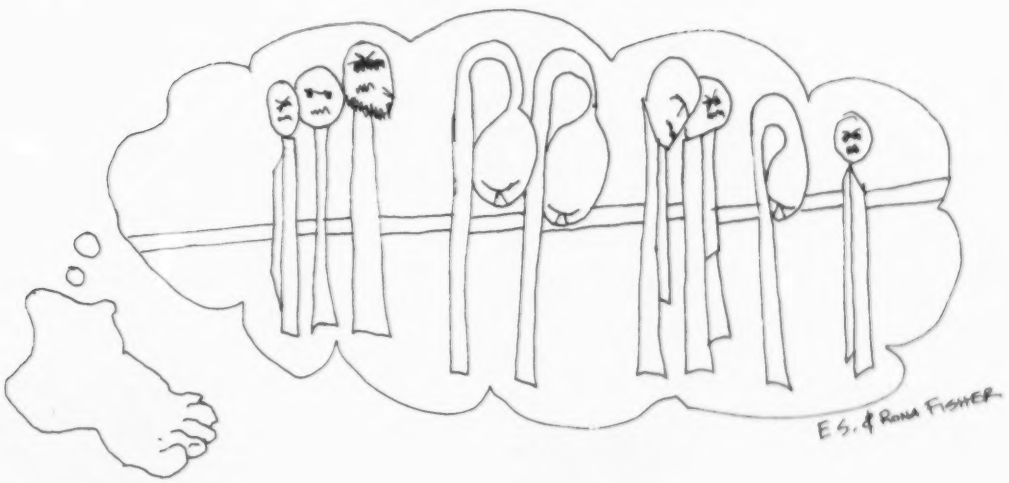
Lunch Time! The lines start all over again. First is the "Noon Meal Line", which is the same as the morning line. Then there's the "Medication Line" if you missed it in the morning or get medication three times a day. Again, this must be done in time for the Work Line for the afternoon.

The really important line forms on commissary day. The only line where very, very few people jump the line. Jumping this line may end up with someone having to go to the "Hospital Line". The "Canteen Line" is okay because there is a reward at the end. If it is a payweek, you may end up with the window being closed in your face at 3:00 p.m.. This means that you will have to suffer through the same thing in the evening or the next day.

Oh, did you forget your sheets? Sorry, the Sheet Line was going on while you were in the Commissary Line. See you next week. Oh well, the Commissary Line wasn't too long so you made it.

Wow, you are free of lines for one whole day.

- Hakim Brown



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"#115 CELL: AN OASIS"

Who has not felt the need for a shade tree in the scorching sun or an open service station on a desolate road late at night? Who can deny the comfort of an afternoon in Fairmount Park after a morning in Center City? And so it goes in #115 Cell, an oasis in an institution.

Some people may think it odd to call a maximum security prison cell an oasis. But to me, living with the dregs of society, #115 Cell is a safe haven of rest. Outside the cell, the conmen with their carnival barking voices are always on the prowl. Ever searching the institution for the weak or innocent, they circle and converge like vultures on a carcass.

But inside my cell, sounds of a symphony fill the air. The music is soft and sweet to my ears, flowing over and through me like a gentle breeze. When I thirst or feel the pangs of hunger, there is food and drink there to nourish me.

After a long, tension-filled day, my cell offers much peace and solitude, safety and security -- truly an oasis amid the scorching institutional desert. It is a place which offers more than bodily necessities, for #115 Cell is also a mental hammock.

Out on the cellblock it is dirty and cluttered; confusion exists with mayhem, and a certain madness fills the air. July brings the heat. Tempers flare like fireworks, and the guards must be summoned to extinguish the flames of animosity and resentment.

It is then that I realize just how much I treasure #115 Cell. It beckons me, this lighthouse on the shore of an angry sea. #115 Cell is clean and organized, a place to rest and contemplate the harsh climate which surrounds me. Inside the cell it is cool, and my temperament is calm. Concentration comes easily. I am at peace with my Maker, and I thank Him for this abode.

So you see, #115 Cell is my oasis. A fertile spot and watering hole for my body, mind, and soul, #115 has all the amenities needed for existence in the brutal harsh environment that thrives all around it.

- Craig P. Datesman

"NEW URBAN WARRIOR"

Once upon a time, there lived a warrior in the midst of the high-rise, in soot covered fog-filled New York City, where the wolf roams the streets nightly in a city that never sleeps.

There are beggars and hustlers, peddlers and pimps, cops and prostitutes, with anonymous shadows dancing at their feet. There are hoards of people racing in different directions, constantly moving like an endless river not knowing where it meets.

The warrior stands back and sees all of this. He remembers his roots and battles over the years. Unlike the typical bedrock pebble that's buried within a thousand others, the warrior broke from underneath the thousand "others" that had him pinned down with the rest and now is freely able to move.

Many others have done the same, but they are never to be seen again racing in the river of life. Perhaps they stumbled into a deeper creek or were physically removed from the flow of mankind.

But the warrior knows that he cannot forget where he came from. If he did, perhaps the same fate awaits him. In the struggle for life, peace, happiness, and social justice, the warrior goes out into the night.

He is not in search of self-served dreams but, determined that among all those pebbles that broke free and can easily flow in the stream of life, he will lend a hand to the many "others" who were stepped on and buried deeper in the bedrock.

Unlike walking past the beggar or the pimp, never looking him straight in the eye as would your typical person who races down the street, the warrior sees and reads the pain that is written in that face.

- Ricardo Mercado

"THE LIFER"

Cold reality hits you
with the closing of the door,
the jingling of the keys,
fading footsteps on the floor.

There's austerity in this place,
a loud silence like a tomb,
that whispers constantly telling
of a cell instead of a room.

As you think of things you've done,
the importance comes to mind
of turning a corner, crossing a street
or just forgetting to be someplace on time.

From the inside looking out
even the beggar isn't poor
for he has all the things in life
that freedom holds in store.

The picture upon your wall
only serves as a constant reminder
of the woman with whom you share the love
that now must be placed behind her.

But it is unwise to
dwell in retrospect,
there are manipulating roles here
that would be dangerous to neglect.

Under the mask of so many
lies, fears, and trepidations,
faces hidden from view
unwilling to risk perception.

Among a multitude of personalities
you find the powerful and powerless
corralled and warehoused together
under conditions of acridness.

Concrete, steel, and the mentality
keeps you in and the public out
and no pictorial in *Time Magazine*
can depict what it's about.

Year after year of monotonous routine
as you search for someone to blame.
Maybe justice who is blind
or Father Time who is lame.

Reality striking the lifer
an experience like no other
trapped between death and living death
never again to recover.

- John Griffin

"ANGER"

Anger is the turmoil that rages
within the bowels of a polluted river,
the frustration of a man who cannot
find a job.

Anger is the effect of hurricanes, wars, and
floods, the lightning and thunder of an
unconscious gun,
-perhaps a mother has lost her
favorite son.
Blood flows free upon the ground and
the sorrowful memory of
those poor souls who grow pale
purple, yellow, green with envy;
jealousy, orange, brown,
blue with madness beyond belief.

What it must be like to never have and forever hope to have.
Anger is red, white, black with pride.
No tolerance left.
Still fresh in my mind.

The unsuccessful search
for justice after the massacre
gazed upon by helpless and horrified eyes
to see forever,

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Anger - spawned by hate in the devil's lair,
to be proliferated by ignorance everlasting,
to be agitated by I can remember,
"Till death do us part?"

Mankind has seen the ravages of anger
through my eyes, upon the essence of my
soul, but I seem silent in the gentle
warmth of the sun. . .now the sun glows
brightly in my time, an angry red sun with vengeful fury on this
--the desert of mankind
where I walk so near to Hell.
No longer do I seem appeased,
my throat is dry,
no moisture to sweat, not even to cry.

Yes, I mankind, must suffer under this
burning ball of flesh.
That is naught but my own creation,

But I fear I must need the help of
someone greater than myself.
For somewhere in this haven of misery,
I must find love before I perish!

- Alexander Morgan

"FAT MOUTHING"

Prison at times for some inmates can be a real Hell. Sometimes the situation can be quite boring. This compels prisoners to make up topics, just to have something to say, something to talk about. Let's listen in on such a conversation, talk being made just to get something going, just to have something to do.

"Hey Overcoat! You know something, I just figured it out. I was born on the same day Jesus was born."

"What Jesus you talking about, Shoes? Jesus Colon, the Puerto Rican?"

"No man! I am talking about Jesus of Nazareth, the one they said made wine out of water!"

"Wait a minute, Shoes. You been drinking that jail-house wine again? Come here let me smell your breath."

"No man, I ain't been doing no drinking. I just been doing some thinking, using my head, man, thinking. First of all, there is only one day; there has always been just one day. The sun never really rises or sets. That's the stuff man has made up. Whoever saw the sun rise or set? It's the Earth that does all the moving and turning, rising and setting, slipping and sliding through the air around the sun. While the Earth is moving, the sun is steady shining, shining today just like it did the day Jesus was born."

"Damn Shoes, you sound like Gaelly-Leo or somebody, you know that cat who was taking a bath and ran in the street hollering, 'I got it! I got it!'"

"Naw, Overcoat, it's just common sense. You ain't got to be taking no bath to figure that out about the sun and all."

"Shoes, let me ask you a question."

"Yeh, Overcoat."

"I dig what you are saying now about there being only one day. Today is the same day that Jesus was born and the same day you was born. It's all the same one day. The sun has been constantly shining, casting its rays henceforth thusly. But Shoes..."

"Yeah, Overcoat."

"You know that robbery you got sentenced to 10 years ago, the one you have been doing time for - long and hard? According to what you are saying about time, you just got sentenced today and not 10 years ago. In other words, you ain't moved off first base yet. So really there is no need for you to try to make parole next month, is there?"

"Look Overcoat, let's talk about the 76ers. How did you like that baseline drive Dr. J made last night against Boston. He-He! Boy, Dr. J sure is a bad mama-jammer!"

- Stanley Pitcher

"PRISON IS A PLACE"

What is prison like? It's not the same for everyone. The prison I know is different from the prison you know.

Prison is a Place where the first prisoner you see looks like an All-American College boy and you're surprised. Later your disgusted because people on the outside still have the same prejudices about prisoners that you used to have.

Prison is a Place where you write letters and can't think of anything to say; where you gradually write fewer and fewer letters and finally stop writing altogether.

Prison is a Place where hope springs eternal; where each parole board appearance means a chance to get out, even if the odds are hopelessly against you.

Prison is a Place where the flame in every man burns low. For some it goes out, but for most it flickers weakly, sometimes flashes brightly, but never seems to burn as bright as it once did.

Prison is a Place where you learn that nobody needs you, that the outside world goes on without you.

Prison is a Place where you find gray hairs in your head, or where you find your hair starting to disappear. It's a place where you get false teeth, stronger glasses and aches and pains you never felt before. It's a place where you grow old and worry about it.

Prison is a Place where you hate through clenched teeth; where you want to beat, kick and scratch and you wonder if the psychologists know what they're talking about when they say you actually hate yourself.

Prison is a Place where you can go for years without feeling the touch of a human hand; where you can go for months without hearing a kind word. It is a place where your friendships are shallow and you know it.

Prison is a Place where you hear about a friend's divorce and you didn't even know he was married. It is a place where you hear about your neighbor's kid's graduation from school and you thought they hadn't started yet.

Prison is a Place where you feel sorry for yourself, then disgusted with yourself for feeling sorry for yourself, then you get mad for feeling disgusted and then try to mentally change the subject.

Prison is a Place where you're smarter than the Parole Board because you know which guys will go straight and which ones won't. You're wrong just as often as the Board Members are, but you never admit it and neither do they.

Prison is a Place where you wait for a promised visit and when it doesn't come you worry about a car accident. Then you find out the reason your visitor didn't come. You're glad because it wasn't serious... and disappointed because such a little thing could keep them from coming to see you.

Prison is a Place where you forget the sound of a baby's cry, the sound of a dog's bark, even the sound of a car's horn.

Prison is a Place where a letter from home or from a lawyer can be like a telegram from the War Department. When you see it lying on the bed, you're afraid to open it. You do it anyway and you usually end up disappointed or angry.

Prison is a Place where you fool yourself, where you promise yourself you'll live a better life when you leave, sometimes you do, but more often you don't.

Prison is a Place where you see men you do not admire and you wonder if you're like them, it is a place where you strive to remain civilized but where you lose ground and you know it.

Prison is a Place where if you're married, you watch your marriage die. It is a place where you learn that absence does not make the heart grow fonder, and where you stop blaming your wife for wanting a real live man instead of a fading memory of one.

Prison is a Place where you go to bed before you're tired, where you pull the blanket over your head, when you're not cold. It's a place where you escape... by reading, playing cards, dreaming or going mad.

- Erwin Layne

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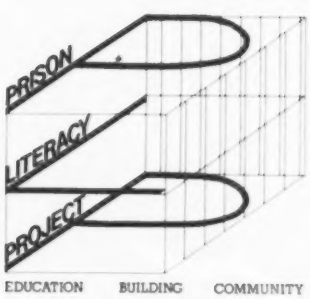

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